



PRESS RELEASE



NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

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U.S. PEACH & APRICOT PRODUCTION LOWER THAN LAST YEAR

OLYMPIA, Wash., July 12, 2005-- The July 2005 forecast of U.S. peach production is 1.24 million tons, down 5 percent from 2004 and 2 percent below two years ago. Twenty of the 28 peach estimating States expect declines in production from last year, while 8 States increased their production from the previous season.

Washington peach crop is forecast at 22,000 tons, up 2 percent from last year and 13 percent above 2003. Production is down from 2004 in Oregon, Idaho, and Utah. In Colorado, production is forecast at 12,000 tons, down 8 percent from the 2004 crop. Hail and wind damage was reported in some areas of the West Slope.

The California Clingstone crop is forecast at 530,000 tons, up 4 percent from the June 1 forecast but 2 percent below the 2004 crop. California experienced ideal weather conditions during bloom period. Full bloom was about a week ahead of last year but harvest was delayed due to cooler than average temperatures during April. Fruit set is lighter than a year ago but size is excellent throughout the State. Good growing conditions were observed during June. Harvest began during late June.

The California Freestone crop is forecast at 410,000 tons, unchanged from the June 1 forecast but 6 percent below the 2004 crop. The State experienced an adequate number of chilling hours which benefitted the Freestone crop. Bloom was delayed due to cool weather. Cool temperatures during spring allowed the fruit to size better than last year's crop. Harvest continued with Brittney Lane, Country Sweet, Fancy Lady, Rich Lady, and Earli Rich the primary varieties picked. Quality is reported to be very good for the Freestone crop.

Georgia's peach crop is forecast at 40,000 tons, down 11 percent from the June 1 forecast and 24 percent from 2004. An unusually cool spring delayed peach maturity until mid-May when several weeks of warm sunny weather provided near ideal conditions. However, frequent showers, and excessive rain, along with high humidity throughout June, provided for frequent disease problems. Heavy hail damage in several areas also reduced production. Harvest reached 51 percent complete in early July. Fruit quality is considered good.

The South Carolina peach crop is forecast at 75,000 tons, down 6 percent from the June 1 forecast but 7 percent above 2004. Crop maturity is behind schedule due to cool weather during spring and early summer. North Carolina's peach crop, forecast at 6,000 tons, is up 71 percent from last year and double the 2003 season. This is the State's best peach crop since 1999. Quality is reported to be good.

In New Jersey, production is forecast at 30,000 tons, down 8 percent from 2004 and 14 percent below 2003. Severe winter damage was reported in the southwest part of the State. An average to good bloom was observed but a cold snap in May caused some damage. Some manual thinning was necessary due to insufficient June drop. Peaches are sizing well and crop prospects may improve if growing conditions continue to be favorable. Production in Pennsylvania is forecast at 20,500 tons, down 11 percent from last year and 44 percent below 2003. Thinning is progressing well and is nearly complete. Production in New York is forecast at 5,300 tons, down 12 percent from 2004 and 18 percent below two years ago.

Michigan's peach crop is forecast at 19,000 tons, up 2 percent from 2004 but 19 percent below 2003. Above normal temperatures during early spring put fruit development ahead of average this year. However, a late April cold snap damaged some orchards, especially in the southwest region. Overall, the peach crop seemed to recover nicely. Pollination was a concern for producers as cold temperatures negatively affected bees.

The final forecast for the 2005 apricot crop is 90,160 tons, down 11 percent from last season's production and 8 percent below 2003. California's 2005 apricot production is forecast at 85,000 tons, equal to the June forecast but 10 percent below last year's production. California's production represents 94 percent of the 2005 U.S. apricot crop. Bloom was early and heavy this year but growers reported heavy fruit drop by mid-March. A cool, wet spring pushed harvest back to a normal starting time. Unsettled late-spring weather, including hail storms, caused significant damage in the southern San Joaquin Valley. Fruit is sizing well, though localized disease problems are reported. Washington's production, at 5,000 tons, is down 26 percent from last year but 2 percent above 2003. Spring frosts and poor weather during pollination combined to reduce prospects for Washington's apricot crop.

To access the entire release, including the complete narrative and tables point to <http://www.nass.usda.gov/wa/press/peaches.pdf>

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